

DEHELLENIZATION AND DR. DEWART REVISITED

A First Person Philosophical Reflection

Allan M. Savage

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Preface

This book is not an introductory text. It presumes some philosophical background and interest in reasoned thought. I have written it as I approach my “retirement years,” as it were, and thus it does not contain reference to the latest scholars who may be writing on this topic. I have reverted, for my own ease of memory, to names with which I was made familiar in my formative philosophical years.

My contention for many years has been that theological problems are first and, primarily, philosophical problems and need to be solved as such. To my mind, Dr. Leslie Dewart’s understanding of “dehellenization,” not to be confused with “unhellenization,” provides a philosophical opportunity for fresh reflection on our inherited classical understanding which presents contemporary problems for theologians. I have attempted such reflection in these pages. I leave it to the reader to decide whether or not my reflections have clarified the issues or clouded them.

It is unfortunate, at this time in the development of ideas that the place of philosophy in relation to theology seems to have been usurped, to a great degree, by sociology and psychology. I am sure that contemporary theologians are the poorer for it. That having been said, it is my hope that those readers who are not philosophically inclined, should they persevere with this book, will uncover insights not previously known.

A remark about my understanding of a “scientific philosophy” is in order. Science, (not to be confused with technology) and philosophy are not mutually exclusive. A scientific philosophy is a reasoned philosophy, yet not necessarily rooted in Greek classical thought. It is also proper to the phenomenological approach I have used in this book.

Chapter One

DEWART'S APPROACH TO DEHELLENIZATION

Introducing Dr Dewart

The entry in *Contemporary Authors* for Dr Leslie Dewart, who began his academic career at the University of Toronto in 1954, reads as follows:

Late in 1969 an investigation by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was convened to examine the theological implications of Dewart's writings. The investigation was generated by the publication of *The Future of Belief*, and, although no condemnation was issued, it was reported that the Congregation asked Dewart not to authorize further editions of the book, a request which the author refused. Dewart also declined to defend his book or his orthodoxy, stating that 'to have struck any such defensive posture would have implicitly granted the legitimacy of the Congregation as a tribunal at whose bar transgressions of the bounds of legitimate speculation may be tried.' Dewart has continued to write about his own interpretation of Christianity in the contemporary world and to delineate what he believes are needed reforms in the Catholic Church.¹

It continues to be to my benefit that I was taught, as an undergraduate student of philosophy, by Dr Dewart at the University of Toronto, (St Michael's College), in the early 1970's.

He introduced his students to phenomenological philosophy, an alternative to scholastic philosophy, used to interpret Catholic theology. In my book, *A Phenomenological Understanding of Certain Liturgical Texts*, I acknowledged that he taught me how to think outside Hellenist categories and yet remain faithful to what truth they so admirably express.² He has consistently worked at developing an alternative way to the Hellenist tradition of thinking beginning with his first book in 1963. Although, he was teaching in a Catholic university, (St Michael's College), he did not restrict the application of his thought to Roman Catholicism.³ Since the reader of this book may not be familiar with Dr Dewart's books, or his attempt at dehellenization, by way of introduction I provide an edited précis and brief exposé of his major works. In presenting this précis and exposé, I have isolated Dr Dewart's seminal thoughts on dehellenization and have attempted to present a faithful understanding of his initial insights. Dr Dewart's books, like all his writing, do not make for light reading. Truly, one needs to make an effort to understand the essence of his thinking. Gregory Nixon has acknowledged this requirement in his review of Dewart's *Evolution and Consciousness* as one reason for the book's limited exposure. "In my view, such wide reading never took place because of bad marketing and because, like all great philosophy, it is a damned demanding tome. This is a work of high philosophy indeed by one of our major intellects who sees clearly and unsparingly and truthfully."⁴ Leslie Dewart's style demands that the reader follows critically his arguments through to their conclusions. I can attest that this task will be richly rewarding for anyone taking the time and making the effort to do so. The presentation of his books, chronologically ordered, broadly illustrates the development of the theme of dehellenization, as I have understood it, unfolding through the stages of his writing career. Dehellenization, as a philosophical concept, is the conscious creation of a human world that does not yet exist. It does not mean the undoing of the world formerly accepted but, rather, the creation of a new world based on the world that does exist. Dehellenization is not merely a theoretical concept without practical consequences.

It is an existential stance, or attitude, that one consciously takes, with effort, within his or her worldly environment. I hope to show that this theme of dehellenization and its development is paramount in all of Dr Dewart's books, (and his articles for that matter), although not always readily appreciated by his readers. Now I turn to Dr Dewart's books.

§

Christianity and Revolution: The Lesson of Cuba (1963)

The first of Leslie Dewart's books, *Christianity and Revolution: The Lesson of Cuba*, is actually an essay in political philosophy about the relationship between the Church and State. Using the Cuban political context to make his point he demonstrates that the integration of the Christian philosophical order and the humanist, (not humanitarian), philosophical order had developed to the point that to distinguish between the two became an almost impossible task. In pre-revolutionary Cuba it was easy to believe that to be a Christian was the same as to be a supporter of and to preserve the existing political state of affairs. From a theological perspective, the lesson to be learned in the Cuban experience, he believes, is not so much that the faithful may reject the Church as relevant to their lives but, more significantly, that the Church may not remain spiritually relevant to the faithful. It was within this insight and understanding that he wrote, *Christianity and Revolution: The Lesson of Cuba*, pointing out that Christians, and not just Cuban Christians, ought to recognize that they are in a crisis and approaching the end of a spiritual and political age.

One indication of the philosophical crisis underlying the political experience is that we cannot come to know something of human relationships without becoming different ourselves. Gaining knowledge is a transforming activity and therefore constitutes a readjustment to our environment and its institutions. Our political institutions, civic and ecclesiastical, do make allowances on the basis of their past experience and adjust themselves to changed environmental circumstances. But they do so at an obsolete rate of development. Contemporary Christian witness is not likely to be heard because of an *a priori* and uncritical understanding on the part of the believer. When answers to our questions, which arise from experience and rules of behaviour based on political expediency, are supplied to us beforehand we need seek no other option in interpreting our experience. We may have long misused the power of our knowledge but our problem is not just how to

correct the past. Our problem is how to plan for the future. Our problem is dehellenization. For many of us the fast-paced, multifaceted modern world may be distant and largely unknown. However, it can never be an alien world, or a non-human one. In short, the world is not a foreign land but rather it is our home.

Christian belief, which is based on a religious philosophy, is neither an abstraction nor an idea. It is not even an ideology. The substance of Christian belief is an existential, historical reality, concretely experienced. It is a historical reality not only in our psychological, social, and natural experience but also in our transcendent, spiritual, and supernatural experience. To believe in the Judeao-Christian revelation is to believe that we exist in a certain historical condition definable by certain events. It is important to recognize that all these events, having taken place within history might have been otherwise.

It is true that we experience society and our environment as more than the sum of their parts, Dewart acknowledges. However, we have not yet managed to devise a theory to explain the nature of the integration of that part known as Greek philosophy into our contemporary experience of society and our environment. Two questions underlie all problems raised within our experience. One is philosophical and the other theological. The inordinate influence of Greek philosophy on the Christian conception of the human being has determined the concept of human freedom which may be more or less deficient regarding the individual human person, but which is totally deficient regarding society and history. As contemporary Western thinkers we believe in human freedom. But, like the Greeks, philosophically we assume the determination of society and of history. This is why we have not really solved the problems of the individual and society and of personal responsibility and our historical condition. The suggestion made here is that both society and history, being human, are just as free in their development as the individual is. Further, society, history and the individual are free in essentially the same way. Whatever we predicate of individual

freedom should be essentially predicable of both society and history.

If the speculative enquiry of the philosopher into practical, human affairs has any meaning and Christian value it is because as Christian philosophers we are trying to work out with our intellects, creatively and faithfully, a plan by which to live in the freedom in which we have been created. This includes the supernatural vocation to which we have been called by God. The Greeks, in order to carry out their plan needed to presuppose in their philosophy “ideas” to which citizens were conformed. Modern philosophers believe, instead, in human freedom, individual, collective and historical. The proposition questioned here is that there is such a Hellenist ideal. When we enquire about that we should do if we are to do the right thing, we enquire about what we have to do to bring into existence what does not yet exist.

From Dr Dewart’s point of view the lesson of Cuba is that we are truly responsible for our conduct, and no one else is. Further, no one can do away with our moral freedom. Only we ourselves can surrender it. The political order, thus, must be grounded on our social and historical freedom. Spiritually, as well as politically, we cannot avoid ruling ourselves except reasonably, humanely, and autonomously. We are not to do as Plato and Aristotle did, that is, attempt to figure out the riddle of a preconceived order, whether social, political, economic, or personal.

Christian thought and practice have alternated between identifying with and separating from the Church and world. The best compromise that we have developed to date is that of distinguishing between the Church and the world without either separating or uniting them. The time has come for Christianity to create its own cultural forms. There is no material out of which to create the Christian cultural forms of the future, except that of our past and our history. This is a good reason for Christianity’s participation in the public life. The Church’s basic relation to cultural forms of public life is found in its role as transformer and redeemer of those

cultural forms. In this book Dr Dewart sets out his initial reflections that will form the basis of the phenomenological and existential activity characteristic of all his writings.

The Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age (1966)

Theism and Consciousness

Contemporary experience should be understood as the mode of consciousness that we have reached as a result of our historical and evolutionary development according to Dr Dewart. Ultimately, we may have to live with divergent conscious conceptualizations of the God of Christian belief. Our mode of consciousness involves the development of some form of alternative understanding to our present understanding. What we make ourselves to be places us in a certain existential relation to God. Our purposiveness which is our intention as determined internally, (Dewart does not mean our purpose, which is our intention as determined externally), resides in our seeking creatively, not to be happy, but simply, to be.

Our present self-creation takes place in the presence of God as God's self-communication to us. For the anti-theist God is, if nothing else, thinkable. For the a-theist God is not. Faith is the existential response of the self to the openness of a perceived transcendent disclosed by conscious experience. We cannot believe in God once-for-all any more than we can exist once-for-all. Christianity is the only religion to have generated religious atheism within itself. Atheism, as a cultural phenomenon, is indigenous to Christian societies. None, but the Christian cultures, have ever generated atheism, and it is difficult to suppose that any others could have done so.

The *post-facto* awareness of one's personal, hence, historical development is not peculiar to Christianity. It is a property of our human nature. Our awareness of the fact that we develop historically must in some sense find its explanation in the nature of human consciousness. Our contemporary psychic life is distinguished from animal psychic life in a much more radical manner than in the philosophical tradition that runs from early Greece to early modern times. In the understanding of recent philosophical thought,

humanity's psychic life exhibits a peculiar character that animals do not appear to share even in part. Unlike animals, we are beings who are present to ourselves. This presence of our being to ourselves is called consciousness. We, and animals both "know," but the real difference between the "types of knowledge" is not of a higher degree for us. The real difference between humanity and animals transcends the order of mere knowledge altogether. This means: we can know not only beings, but also be-ing; not only being-as-other, but also being- itself.

The basic characteristic of human existence is sometimes called transcendence. The typical form of human development is an increase in consciousness in a philosophical sense. The distinctiveness of this development, over learning properly so-called, is that it cannot take the form of a quantitative increase. An increase in consciousness develops as we become increasingly aware of that which, in a sense, we already were conscious of. This means that to heighten one's consciousness is to "realize" that which had been "before our eyes" all the time and which, indeed, we had already seen, but which we now see all over again "in a new light", that is, with a sharper, clearer, heightened or nobler meaning. This new meaning is not a substitute for the earlier one. It is transcendent meaning. It is possible only insofar as it emerges from the earlier one that it incorporates to itself and thus brings itself into a "fuller" and "richer" experience. The heightening of consciousness, or realizing a nobler meaning, presupposes a genuine but more primitive consciousness. Heightening of consciousness can only grow out of a primitive consciousness and it is meaningful only in relation to it. Consciousness is not an essentially and originally private event that is afterwards communicated, (through signs), to other human beings. Its essential privacy and its originally personal nature are strictly related to its essentially public and originally social and historical nature. Conceptualization is the socio-historical process by which our consciousness and ourselves evolve. Our present history is an ex-animal one. It is the conceptualization of experience that makes us conscious and

human.

Our psychic life is not the mind's union with a reality from which it was originally separated by its substantive self-containment. Our psychic life is the mind's self-differentiation of its-self out of a reality with which it was originally continuous and united in undifferentiation. Consciousness is a process whereby our being emerges. Consciousness is not the becoming of a being. Consciousness is the coming-into-being of the mind and soul. Thus, there is no real difference between consciousness and self-consciousness.

All consciousness bears directly upon reality; all human consciousness is conceptual of something. Self is that which is conscious, that which can signify itself to its-self. To be a subject is to be an object to oneself. We no longer understand personality in relation to Nature, since we do not understand being as a hierarchy of perfection and being. Personality is the proper perfection of being, consciousness and experience at their present historical stage of evolution. Consciousness is the constituent of humanity. It is the equivalent of life and existence. A person is a being who knows enough to want to go beyond itself. Traditionally, belief must bear directly upon the reality of God, not upon words or upon concepts about God, this is the corollary to the idea that God reveals himself, not words about or concepts of himself. To believe in a concept of God is to believe in what we really become cognitively related to which is St Thomas's position. If a Christian looks at the world and understands nature through Hellenic eyes, it will be necessary to assert the omnipotence of God over and against nature. God does not have power over nature. Let us say that nature does not have its own natural finalities independently of God's. The fundamental relation between humanity and God consists in the mutual presence of God and humanity in conscious creation of the world. As Christian theism is dehellenized the Christian faith may recast the meaning of religion in terms that do not at all imply God's ascendancy over humanity and humanity's submission to God. With

the adoption of Greek philosophy came the spilt of the ontic relations of God and humanity into the metaphysical, which are antecedent, and the moral, which are consequent.

Theism and Knowledge

In the Western traditional understanding, to know a thing better means to know more things about the same thing. The absence of revelation after the close of the New Testament era means the faith of Christianity cannot teach any new truths. The Trinity and Incarnation were revealed and taught by Christianity in relation to Judaism. Once complete, Christianity could only increase by the explication of objects as already known as prior objects of faith. We should not suppose that the fullness of God's self-revelation in Jesus means that God's self-revelation ceased at a certain point in time, after which we no longer enjoy the revealing presence of God, but enjoy only the record of the revelation completed in the past.

Truth is not the adequacy of our representative intellectual operations, but the adequacy of our conscious existence. For, the truth is the valuable quality that it is only because it is part of the process of our self-creation and coming-into-being. Truth can be a relation towards being only if it is a fidelity rather than a conformity. Conformity is a relation towards another that is owing to another by reason of the other's nature. Fidelity is a relation towards another that one owes to oneself by reason of one's own nature. Conformity [like law] obligates from without. Fidelity, like nobility, obligates from within.

Concepts are the cultural form of human experience. The development of human consciousness means the development of concepts and conceptual systems. We develop culturally in order to exist. To master the language of contemporary experience is in reality to think in contemporary concepts. To think in new concepts is to develop one's original experience. The conceptualization of

faith is a process by which we render ourselves present to that-in-which-we-believe. In the theory of knowledge suggested here by Dewart human knowledge is not the bridging of an original isolation but, on the contrary, the self-differentiation of consciousness in and through the agent's objectification of the world and itself. An agent's conceptualization is the socio-historical mechanism through which the self-differentiation of consciousness can take place. Concepts are not the subjective expression of an objective reality. Concepts are the self-expression of consciousness and are therefore the means by which we objectify the world and the self and the means by which we self-communicate with another self (including God). Concepts are the means by which we objectify ourselves to another self and by which we objectify ourselves to ourselves.

Conscious knowledge is not an intentional union of knower and known, of subject and object. Hence the contingency of creatures is not to be conceived as a real distinction between essence and existence, but as that peculiar quality of their factuality which consists in their appearing, their coming-into-being, their sudden emergence, as it were, onto the cosmic stage without having been previously listed in the program. Humanity's contingency is the fact that in order to be humanity it must create itself.

Gabriel Marcel and Nicolas Berdyaev do not conceive any reality as polarized by existence and essence. They are concerned with being in its empirical immediacy. They try to avoid every a priori construction such as that required us to distinguish between essence and existence as constituents of reality as such. For such a philosophy would not be concerned with demonstrating that a God whom "everyone" knows actually exists, or that God, a possible being and an actual object of knowledge, "objectively" exists. Such a philosophy would be concerned with showing how God is truly present to human experience. Such a philosophy concerns the presence and truth of God. Such a God, however, would not be even partially that of Greek metaphysics. For this would be an integrally

Christian philosophy. Its God would be wholly and exclusively the Christian God.

Theism and Personal Presence

A person cannot be a termination of nature. But nature is a termination of personality and a person terminates itself and makes its nature in and through existing. Christ was essentially the redeemer of Israel. The Word (*logos*) was the restorer of all things and all humanity. The person, (as subject), is a center of consciousness. A person is that which can objectify itself. A person is that which can objectively signify itself to itself by means of its (conceptual) self.

In Christian theism intelligibility is a matter of fact, not of necessity. For to exist and to be present are quite different things. A reality beyond the totality of being reveals itself by its presence. There can be, beyond the totality of all actually existing being, something present to us in our experience, in the sense that when somebody's presence does really make itself felt it makes me more fully myself than I should be if I were not exposed to its impact. Hence, an adequate philosophy generates an adequate theology. What needs to be "proven" is not that a God-being objectively exists. What requires "a demonstration," for it is not immediately obvious, is God's presence. In what sense, in what way, and with what consequences, God is present.

Worship might be better understood as the rendering of our selves present to the presence of God, whether in the interior prayer which sends no message to God but which receives his presence, or in the public and common ceremonies which visibly, audibly and sensibly unite us through our collective presence to each other in the presence of the present God. The concept of the supernatural is not of itself an intrinsic part of the Christian faith. What is absolutely fundamental to the Christian experience is that which is conceptualized in the doctrine of grace. But as immanent in us,

the Spirit of God is known as the “gift” (*donum*) of God.

Theism and Dehellenization

The hellenization of Christianity was the gradual transformation of an earlier cultural form into a later one, it being assumed that the truth of Christianity depended on neither form as such. Hellenism, after all, was, though not the cultural form of the whole world as we know it today, the cultural form of the ecumenical world. Throughout the apostolic and patristic ages it was practically impossible to distinguish between the universalization and the hellenization of Christianity. In contrast to this culture, in the Hebraic culture, God was a transcendent presence. God was a reality other than being who is present to being (by which he makes being to be).

Reality, as necessarily and exclusively conceivable as being, is an illusion. A Christian can equate intelligibility and necessity only as long as belief in evolution is rejected. Intelligibility and necessity require the adoption of a Hellenic philosophical viewpoint. The integration of theism with everyday experience requires a dehellenization of dogma and doctrine and specifically that of the Christian doctrine of God. Dehellenization may be described as a conscious historical self-fashioning of the cultural form which Christianity requires now for the sake of its future. In other words, dehellenization means the conscious creation of the future of belief.

Christian thinking has modified Greek metaphysics. From the Christian perspective, in creatures there is a real distinction between essence and existence. Yet, in God there is no distinction between essence and existence. The creature/creator relationship was not part of the Greek metaphysic. There is therefore, an unbridgeable difference between the way God is in se, that is, in himself and the way God is in our knowledge. This approach leads logically to either the skepticism of unbelievers or the fideism of believers. Perhaps the most significant defining point of an adequate contemporary

Christian philosophy would be that it should begin with a consideration of the needs of the Christian faith, not those of Greek metaphysics. The obsolescence of Scholasticism goes together with that of Christianity's Hellenic cultural form.

In recent times, as philosophy has diverged more and more from its Greek presuppositions, and as nature and essence have ceased to be understood as intelligible necessities, the concept of the supernatural has lost its usefulness for Christian theism. The mainstream of Catholic philosophy has remained Scholastic and hence unsympathetic to the contemporary understanding of nature. Catholic theology, especially in those circles that have consciously abandoned Scholasticism, that is, the Teilhardians, or in those specialties that were never dominated by it, that is, scriptural studies, has increasingly turned to non-Christian, secular thought for philosophical help.

In the alternative view to Hellenized thought, grace continues to be what Christian belief always held it was, but nature ceases in every way to be opposed to grace. Nature is naturally to receive grace because that is how it was in fact created. Since nature is essentially contingent, deriving its intelligibility from its factuality and historicity, nature is historically, not metaphysically, related to grace. Grace is thus understood as a historical fact. God's presence to humanity, which existentially qualifies the historical intelligibility of nature, is to be understood alternatively to Hellenized thought through a concept of Theism appropriate to the world's come of age, according to Dewart.

The Foundations of Belief (1969)

Belief and Evolution

Will Christianity undertake to direct its own evolution or continue to evolve at an obsolete rate and in a pre-conscious mode? In a world increasingly characterized by the self-organization of ourselves on a global scale, the catholicity of the Catholic faith must seek the ultimate religious integration of humanity. Dewart suggests that philosophy today must give itself a meta-metaphysical orientation, that is to say philosophy should transcend its metaphysical stage of development, and thus initiate its meta-metaphysical stage. Since everything evolves, the real problem for contemporary humanity is not whether the world will change or whether it will remain the same. The issue is whether the world will change of its own accord, without human management, or whether it will be changed deliberately, consciously and with the self-regulation that is possible for the world only when evolution is humanely directed by humans.

This particular book, *The Foundations of Belief*, is substantially concerned with determining what, in the order of Christian belief, has been changed by the phenomenological approach and what has not yet been changed by it. For the truth does not really remain, but develop, and the original truth cannot retain its original value for evolving humanity unless it evolves as humanity itself evolves. Knowledge, (or its equivalent), is a concept of that to which consciousness relates itself. The specific way in which humanity conceives reality, and its relation to reality, will determine the limits within which its religious consciousness can expand. The future lies ahead, beyond Hellenized Hebraism, not in pre-hellenized Hebraism. The reshaping of the future is but the other side of the analysis of the past. Existentially, humanity is orientated not primarily toward thing-relationships, but toward existence-relationships that are historically unique. The project of redeveloping Christian belief cannot rest either on the traditional philosophical foundations, or on those provided by contemporary

though as they presently stand.

Cultures do not frequently repudiate the religion that brought them into cohesive being in the first place. A more promising approach is to attempt to understand how the inner scission of the cultures of our world occurred so that we may be in a position to heal it. Human experience has developed to a level of self-consciousness, self-creativity and self-relation to reality. A Hellenist culture was not sufficient to express or continue this evolution. The progress of Christian culture has taken place in the absence of conscious Christian belief. And largely by default, we tend to identify the way in which we in this tradition think, as the way in which humanity thinks.

Error is not an abnormal, abortive issue of knowledge. It is the normal condition of its development. Error occurs in the evolution of humanity's self-understanding. Because of its evolutionary context, Christianity must be relevant to the level of human consciousness achieved half to a million years after appearing on earth. Humanity must begin to plan for a humanity, which can begin to foresee the future. The novelty of the latest evolutionary development of humanity is that human evolution is now beginning to pass into a self-directed stage. Human experience changes in only one crucial respect, namely, in its experience of itself. Humans are the sort of being whose nature makes it possible for them to define themselves for themselves. Humans can now direct their own evolution. In humans "evolution is interiorized and made purposeful."⁵

But the problem is that it is not so very easy to give a concrete shape to the central, final project of our total life. Nor must we suppose that the concrete form of this project must be the same for everyone. For to each life, or creative freedom, corresponds a vocation, (which is itself subject to evolution throughout life), which is not definable from the outset and which can be understood only to the extent that it is realized, and which must therefore be

undertaken not under the sign of certainty, (rational or religious), but only under the sign of faith, hope and love. It is a question of finding out what is a truly worthwhile risk.

The project of our total life is not a restoration, because the evolution of humanity is not a return, but an assent, to God. Human nature is not ready-made. Human nature is on its way, evolving towards a goal which can be truly realized, but which was not preset from the first. The goal itself is creatively determined within humanity's evolutionary history in the presence of a historically active God. Like human culture as a whole, Christianity in the future may become more of a do-it-yourself affair than at any previous time.

Belief and Necessity

The most fundamental concept at work in Greco-Roman culture was the idea that whatever happens, happens necessarily. The creation of the very concept of philosophy must be interpreted as the peculiarly Greek reaction to the world in which civilized humanity had made its evolutionary appearance. Greek philosophy embodied humanity's first act of faith in the intellect, and expressed its first act of hope that its struggle with the overwhelming reality of a fateful world might perhaps end in an unforeseeable victory for humanity. This fate and this hope were grounded upon an implicit realization that humanity's consciousness or awareness is what defines the fundamental and constitutive relation to reality. The discovery of the Greek, therefore, was the astoundingly simple and elementary idea that humanity, by nature, relates itself to reality and that humanity's relation to reality is a self-relation to reality. It is only after we have learned to define ourselves in terms of our consciousness that we can appreciate the logic of the process by which we became conscious of ourselves.

The principal, basic, typical, natural and the most proper human relation to reality is that of contemplation, as Plato and Aristotle

repeatedly and extensively remarked. To be acquainted with reality is not to interact with it [as an object]. It is to witness it, to reflect it inwardly, to grasp it as it is in itself. It is not, for instance, to converse with it. To be acquainted with it is to see it, to watch it go by, to observe it as it follows its own, (necessary), way. Thus, human consciousness as conceptualized by the Greeks, as knowledge was automatically burdened with the connotation of objectivism, which it has retained to our own day. To assume that every being is, as such, constituted by an entirely self-contained necessity, is thus automatically to discard the possibility that it be fundamentally contingent upon another.

The real dependence of the creature upon God does not consist in the former having received its necessary reality from the latter, but in its having received a reality, which is not necessary, even after it has been received. The positive gain of the last one hundred years of philosophy can be summed up in its having learned to take advantage of the reflexivity of human consciousness, arriving in the end at the conclusion that the mind is indeed essentially definable in terms of the presence of the self to itself.

Belief and Knowledge

To be aware of the other as such is to overcome its otherness. To be aware is to reach the other, to in-tend the other, despite its original alienation separating the other from oneself. The overcoming of this original alienation is what is called knowledge. To know is, therefore, for the mind to pass from the condition of isolation to a certain union with the world. Dewart underscores St Thomas's explanation that this union takes place within the knower, that is, the cognitive power brings about the unification of the knower to the known, although the known is not thereby unified to the knower, (that is, it does not know the other, unless it is also a knower) [*Contra Gentiles*, II, 59]. In every act of knowledge, the knower knows an-other precisely as other-than-himself. Truth is not the overcoming of a dichotomy but rather it is the conformity of the

knower to the known. The question arises, then, whether this assumed conformity refers to something in the knowing power or something in being [*De Veritate*, I, 2].

Insofar as one knows, the knower is the known. The union effected by knowledge is not a joining, but a unification. In knowledge the knower becomes identified with the known. In brief, as Parmenides put it, it is the same thing that can be and can be thought. The assertion refers to the nature of thinking and being, not the act of thinking and being.

Belief and Consciousness

No spatial connotation is intended by “there it is” or “here I am.” These are subjective states of awareness. The basic element of human consciousness does not imply any understanding of what “I” am, any more than it necessarily implies any understanding of what “it” is. What one does not need to learn through trial and error, what one does not need to be taught, and what indeed one cannot be taught, because it is an essential part of consciousness which conditions every instance of it, is that the act of consciousness itself is other than its object. In other words, the universe which knowledge reveals is to be described in terms of a dichotomy between the self and the world. The object-subject dichotomy is not the condition of the possibility of conscious experience. On the contrary, consciousness is the condition of the possibility of the opposition of subject and object. But since prior to knowledge there can be no such opposition, we can deduce, moreover, that knowledge is the introduction of an intentional opposition, an intentional dichotomy, into that which was originally undifferentiated, unrelated and perhaps even physically, continuous and one. Knowledge is the condition of the possibility of subjectivity appearing in the world of objects, by the subject’s own self-differentiation from, by its opposing itself to, and by opposing to itself, the objectivity of the world. For humanity as such is, to begin with, emergent from the world of reality in which it exists.

By being conscious humanity differentiates itself from the world.

Humanity cannot be composed as beings, who are at bottom nothing but objects, even if they are objects who think. The subject is, as such, what an object never is, namely conscious. And consciousness is not reduplicative of reality, but self-presentative, both in the sense that it presents itself to the world, and in the sense that by doing so it presents itself to itself. Consciousness is, thus, the self-presence of being and humanity being present to itself. Subjectivity is being with oneself, a mode of being which is possible only in relation to being with another. And this is why the presence of the subject to itself is called consciousness.

Consciousness emerges as it, differentiates, abstracts, separates and opposes things to each other, that is, as it objectifies the world of being, and as it differentiates itself from that which is not itself. The achievement of consciousness is the achievement of self-possession. The achievement is the emergence or coming into being of a being which is present to itself. Humanity is contingent because it must make itself to be whatever it becomes in a situation that is, to begin with, given. Thus it is contingent also because this situation presses it, or rather, impels it to create itself. In that situation, however, whatever it becomes is what it makes itself. For knowledge is the self-differentiation of the subject, or self, from the world. Knowledge does place the subject in a certain relation to the world that was not previously held. Objects have meaning precisely because they are relative to the self, a self whose subjectivity results from its differentiation from them. There are no pre-determined categories in which we must think about reality, whether pre-determined by the nature of the mind, (as Kant thought), or by the nature of reality, (as all pre-Kantian philosophers have thought). Truth and falsity pertain to the relationship between subject and object, not to the subject or object itself.

The new gift of life cannot be given in the same way in which the old can, namely, without prior consultation, as it were, with the

recipient of the gift. But to be actually given, and not merely offered, the new existence must be accepted or received. That is, humans must make themselves freely and they must make themselves free. The offer of grace is the offer of a reality beyond being, and this is why it cannot be taken away by death, or conversely, why its absence would give death the power to take away human reality. The problem really is whether or not the analysis of religious experience reveals a reality, which transcends being as such. By reality, in ordinary language, we usually mean that which transcends consciousness, that which is other than oneself. Reality is whatever the self has real relations towards. Being, on the other hand, is the object of thought. It is that which is empirically given as such. The possibility that we are entertaining here is whether there may not be a reality which is other than being, a reality whose reality is not given by an act of to-be. Non-being, thus, does not mean, nothing. It means that which is not being. But should there be a real reality other than being, though it would not be being, it would not be, nothing. It would be something real, albeit, no being at all. Unlike common sense, metaphysics does not merely identify reality with being. Metaphysics identifies reality as being.

It is historically understandable if St Thomas thought that our way of thinking is the human way of thinking. The fact seems to be, however, there is not a single way for humanity to relate itself to reality and that no way to do so is necessary, primary, natural or privileged. If the world is to be one of increasingly human control, the problem is that of finding an intellectual basis upon which to understand the meanings that the world offers us. The point is that ordinary human experience is insufficient unless it extends itself into a new extraordinary dimension. When it so extends itself, experience becomes religious experience or faith. Humans are, therefore, the beings who come into being, the beings who emerge as such through self-differentiation. Humans are, therefore, beings conscious of themselves, being present to themselves. Faith is precisely the transcendent, projective dimension of the presence of human consciousness to itself.

Belief and Dehellenization

St Thomas Aquinas introduced into the Christian world certain philosophical forces that provide the principles by which the new Christian world could be “rebuilt.” Contrary to his thinking, one of the most important ways in which the Western mind has begun to dehellenize itself has been precisely in its “recasting” of the concept of becoming, honouring more faithfully and critically than at any previous time the observable facts, finally concluding against Plato and Aristotle that change is not “from opposite” to opposite and that it is not “the act of that which is in potency insofar as it is in potency” (Aristotle, *Physics*, III, 1 (201a 10). Becoming is not the result of a process of generation which begins as corruption ends.

In classical philosophies cognition brings reality to humans, whereas a philosophical appetite brings humans to reality, thus, humans are the beings who exist in a situation, in a relative situation. The dehellenization of Christian belief does not mean the rejection of our Hellenic past. The term dehellenization is not simply negative, it is not un-hellenization, but de-hellenization. If we wanted to put it in strictly positive terms we might describe it as “the conscious creation of the future of belief.” Knowledge cannot be the transcending of the dichotomy between object and subject, because that dichotomy takes place within knowledge. Rather, the mind is the presence of the self to itself as it becomes present to things other than itself. The mind is present to itself whenever it is present to anything else. Truth is that property of consciousness that renders humanity transcendent. Truth is that quality of knowledge which impels consciousness beyond itself. Truth is, therefore, that which makes human understanding dynamic and creative, searching and self-critical, restless and progressive, and ambitious to the ultimate degree.

Psychoanalysis is to date one of the most thoroughgoing and consistent applications of the methodological insight which came with awareness of the historical character of human consciousness,

since it is a technique for effecting certain changes in humanity's present consciousness, (in anticipation of a future condition, that is mental health), which are rendered possible by the present mastery over a remembered and analyzed past. The history of philosophy is not the history, as the Greeks might have said, of one damned philosophical thing after another. The history of philosophy is the history of the progress of human thought. The task to which philosophy is called today is, therefore, not the dismantling and reconstruction, but the transcending of metaphysics, and not merely the transcending of Greek metaphysics, which is but the beginning of metaphysical evolution, but the transcending of every metaphysics, and even the transcending of its ghost, which still haunts phenomenological ontologies themselves. Philosophy should proceed to the next stage of dehellenization. Philosophy need not be ontological in its essential nature, if being is not the name of reality as such. There has been an unwarranted reduction of reality to that reality, being, which is given in empirically given being as such.

Religion, Language and Truth (1970)

Evolution of humanity has deeply affected religion in general and belief in God in particular. Pluralism no longer means friendly toleration but also the inner freedom of Christian believers to put their varied denominational confessions to work for the common good. The day may come when the ecumenical movement may find it paradoxically necessary to promote the preservation of the multiplicity of Christian forms for the very sake of the spiritual unity of the Christian faith. We are conscious of the world that exists around us, obtrudes upon us and constitutes our situation and locale and about our own relations to that world. The gravest religious crisis of the Catholic Church has to do with the epistemological, metaphysical and other philosophical questions that underlie theological and religious disputes. Many people in the Church, particularly among those in authority, have for all practical purposes invested merely philosophical views with the certitude of faith and the authority of revelation.

For the Hellenist fatefulness or necessity was not a single separate principle or factor or universal law affecting the world. It was an intrinsic characteristic of the cosmos as whole. Thus, for Hellenists the wise man learns to will that which will in any event come to pass. However, the human race is more than the totality of individuals existing on the surface of the earth at any given time. Humanity is also the historical collectively of generations succeeding generations in time. For, given the reality of human freedom, then humanity's creation of history may well take place without, and even against, God. That is, humanity's real ability to create itself, and its real ability – given enough time – to create a possible world, means that humanity, if it wants to, can create the sort of world in which there is no room for God, and the sort of history which dispenses with moral requirements transcending humanity itself. The Kingdom of God, or heaven, is the outcome of history when history is created by humanity in the presence of God. The real question is no longer whether war can be just, but whether it is morally permissible for

humanity to fail to change the world and reshape history in such a manner that the dilemmas of the past shall not arise.

It is never we who are lost. What may be lost is one's home. What we may be unable to find is our chosen goal. We do not lose ourselves; we lose our way. But all we know is that we are here, without knowing where elsewhere is, we cannot find our way, that is, we remain unaware of the direction in which we must strike in order to get somewhere else. Without orientation we can only ramble, or else remain bound to the vicinity, pretending that the world stops at the horizon. In any event, we would be getting nowhere.

Language

Language is a way of using vocal sounds that they can appear, upon reflection, as the vicar of, or as the label for, or as the pointer to, as a sign of that which is experienced by the mind. The message is the mind. There are no media of communication; there are only messages. The visual medium is the hieroglyphic, or ideogram, not the alphabet. Hence, such communication [hieroglyphics or ideogram] cannot be like writing which emphasizes its relational quality. Christianity holds that God created the world out of love. No necessity, as in Greek thinking, is part of God's purpose. Contingency is intrinsic to being, after it has been created and as it continues to exist.

There is no empirically detectable difference between speaking and thinking. The mind is but the human body's consciousness of itself. Humans are not speaking animals because they are thinking ones. Humans can think only because they can speak. Language is the condition of the possibility of thought. We fail to recognize that the dichotomy between thought and speech is the result of the reflexive properties of human consciousness. A useful way of stating the view of language that is implicit on the results of our inquiry so far might be the following: rather than the reflection of our mental

relationship to reality, language is the construction or creation of such a relationship.

To think or talk about the world, however, is to create a relationship to it. Humans are not merely related to but self-related to the world. Thinking is one's becoming related to the world precisely as a self, that is, as that which is not only related to it but knows its relations to it. So, when I am conscious of the table I exist, as it were, "in" the table, or perhaps, better, at the table. But I exist there as a self, my existing at the table does not confuse me with the table. On the contrary, I exist at the table only as other-than-it.

What language and thought achieve is the creation, the viability, the facilitation and the continuation of the emergence of human selfhood in relation to the world. The activity we undertake happens to us. It is not anything that happens to reality in itself. What Leslie Dewart has had constantly in mind, both when criticizing the semantic view and when suggesting a syntactic alternative, has been the factuality of the world. Indeed, the trouble with the traditional concept of truth is that ultimately it would fit only a world in which the facts were more than the facts, a world in which the facts had an intrinsic meaningfulness and necessity, an inner truth which was the ground and cause of the reflected truth of the human mind.

In other words, the need to abide by the facts does not reside in the facts, but in consciousness, and it does not mean that truth is extracted from the facts or given by their mental reduplication. Thus, the facts are the same for every individual, yet the truth is not necessarily the same for all. Meaning is not in the facts, but in the conscious apprehension of the facts by the person. For the perspective adopted here, however, it would appear more adequate to understand language as self-communication rather than as story-telling. Or perhaps it might be better to say that language is creative of humanity's selfhood rather than illustrative of the world's objectivity.

Knowledge and Reality

This belief in a hidden mind-like principle of reality, the Greeks called the inner *logos* (word) and, the Latins the inner *ratio* (reason), this faith in a sort of cryptic Medusan spell which reality as such supposedly possess within its metaphysical recesses, whence it exerts its final charm upon the contemplating mind, stands at the earliest point of transition from the primitive Greek religions to the sophisticated, rational religion of Greek philosophy.

The essence of the superstition is the supposition that things are filled with something other than themselves, something that is their real reality. It is the supposition that nothing is really what it seems. If we are ignorant and un-knowing the reason is not that our skills are underdeveloped, but that reality is constituted by a resistant destiny that defies penetration by the mind.

Knowledge cannot be the attainment of the inward necessities of things because things are not filled with necessity. To look for the inner constitutive principle of anything in order to understand it was to assume that it was intelligible precisely insofar as it was unrelated to everything else. Intelligibility is to be found in relations of things, not in the things themselves. In the case of humanity, this means that human nature is not to be found in the individual substance of a human, but in the temporal and historical projections, in the process by which the individual emerges out of the past towards the future.

As an alternative to the traditional perspective, a functional syntactic interpretation of language would conceive language as the means whereby humanity can situate itself in the world and create its selfhood out of its relation to reality. Cognition is a separation which differentiates what is self-contained and self-sufficient out of what is not so. Cognition is not reduplication of another, but the creation of oneself. In other words, meaning is the formal condition of the possibility of cognitive self-relation to reality. Cognition is the self-creative activity of conscious selfhood as it differentiates and

opposes itself to the world of objects from which it is originally indistinct. Language is the concrete actualization at a given moment of our self-creativity in relation to some determinate object out of the vast reality of being in the world. The truth-value of language hinges on its relative adequacy or effectiveness in the formation of consciousness.

Faith and Revelation

If faith is assent to a truth revealed by God, then the formulation or conceptualization of the truths of human faith lies outside the realm of human experience. Thus, truth of faith is literally a divine truth for it is the truth of God's own reflexive understanding transplanted into the human mind that can but mindlessly hold it. This is absurd. It is impossible for humans to know or to be aware of realities which humans do not experience in one way or another. No analysis of faith can be sound unless it is an analysis of faith as a form of human experience. Faith originates when humans suddenly discover themselves as already existing and to be a part of an on-going world, which is already in progress. But it does imply a commitment to conceive oneself and to guide oneself according to the view that the initiative that brings us and the world of being into being does not lie within ourselves. Faith is human self-understanding, but precisely as relative to a transcendent reality beyond its own, and humanity's self-disposition in the presence of a transcendent reality beyond itself.

It appears that the human mind has developed and one of the consequences of its development has been a rising standard of expectation in understanding. In other words, the notion that revelation is a communication (to humanity) implies that human nature and specifically human consciousness and experience are essentially involved in it. The language of revelation is human even if the truth of it reaches beyond humanity. Revelation is, therefore, in a very real sense natural to humanity. Once again we reach the conclusion, not that the concept of revelation is necessarily invalid,

but that it must be recast in order to make allowance for humanity's greater awareness of its own nature — and in particular of the greater awareness of the self-present character of human consciousness. The teaching authority will be shackled by its felt duty to be above all the custodian of the past, and not the architect of the future. Many Catholics have learned to learn as it has become possible to learn in modern times. The trouble is that the Magisterium has not learned to teach in a correspondingly advanced way. The teacher of today does not attempt to facilitate the emergence of truth and comprehension, but of truthfulness and creativity. Truth is a means of communication of the self. It may be truly said that today, in a very real sense, humanity's capacity for truth has increased. Humanity must participate more consciously and deliberately in its own self-fashioning than it has been necessary or possible in the past.

Truth is that quality of knowledge that accounts for the fact that the more we actually know, the more we potentially know. Truth is the enlargement of the horizon of consciousness. To insist upon any given conceptual, culturally concrete form of religious truth, even after such a form has ceased to be consistent with the current form of humanity's cultural development, may be religiously prejudicial, precisely because it may obscure the very meaning which the obsolete conceptual form once revealed.

The Magisterium must guide Christians to grow in their vocation, despite their moral and intellectual shortcomings, to the degree that they themselves grow in consciousness, creativity and responsibility. The Church is the living Body of Christ and Christ was not a messenger from God, but God's self-revelation. In other words, the Church has no message from God; the Church is a message from God.

Faith is that self-disposition which renders all experience meaningful and worthwhile. And this is the view that the Christian faith is protean enough, catholic enough to give one and the same

religious meaning and value to a variety of alternative forms of human experience while remaining an identifiably Christian faith. The problem is, therefore, not how to defend the traditional concept of God against contemporary experience, but, on the contrary, how to take advantage of the growth of human experience in order to improve upon our concept of God.

Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature (1989)

Dewart's Dehellenization: A Mosaic of Human Experience

Very few of the observations and concepts he has used in his investigation are original; indeed, most are not even new, Dewart maintains. What he has tried to accomplish here — the sort of task that philosophy had always deemed among its chief responsibilities, though in the anglophone world as he gathers no longer — is mainly to arrange a large number of tesserae that, if taken one by one, are very familiar, into the single mosaic of a fairly comprehensive and unconventional synthesis.

If we understood sufficiently well how human nature came into being, we would have mastered why the conditions of human life today are such as they are — which would, of course, facilitate our improving them. Philosophic explanations of human evolution have usually depended on the postulation of some sort of evolutionary force that fuelled the development of life from within, as it were, or else attracted it from ahead or directed it from above.

For a thousand years before Scholasticism the world had accordingly appeared to Christians as a system of natural forces — a hierarchy of “causes” and “effects” — which had itself been caused by the all-necessitating power of a transcendent First Cause. But a further interpretation of God’s creative causality, developed in the thirteenth century principally by Thomas Aquinas, introduced a novelty that stated with precision what had been, at best, confusedly implicit in earlier Christian thought: God’s creativity consisted not only in the causation of what creatures were — or of their “essences” — but above all of their being whatever they were — or of their “existing,” as we would more commonly say today.

Having originated with philosophy, a phenomenological disposition has been cultivated so far mostly by philosophers, though nothing

in its nature restricts its usefulness to this field. Phenomenology is at bottom no more — and no less — than a radical empiricism. The reduction of the humanity of human beings — to anything — results from a sort of self-doubt or self-suspicion that is no more justified when it operates under scientific than under theological sanction; behaviourism is a modern form of an ancient prejudice that some human beings seem to have against themselves.

The essence of human life lies in its having a conscious quality. Being conscious is what we immediately experience ourselves to be. Conscious experience is the sort that enables the experiencer to become aware of the otherness of the world. It is only because our experience is conscious that we have selfhood, or that we enjoy conscious identity. To be a self is to be capable of experiencing our reality as a conscious experiencer and as the conscious agent of our behaviour. The ability to experience reality as such and ourselves as real is the essence of human, conscious life.

It is a defining characteristic of all life that it tends to preserve itself by adjusting to its environment. It is typical of animal life that its adjustment is mediated by sensory abilities that furnish the organism with experience of itself and its world. Unlike an animal, a human being adjusts by relating itself, to a world that is perceived as real to itself, whom it perceives as a self, and to other selves, whom it perceives as beings who perceive themselves as selves and other human beings as selves. A phenomenological procedure allows us to have direct access to ourselves, our self-understanding need not be mediated by our prior understanding of anything else. It has been suggested that the ability to experience consciously is not inborn, but acquired. Consciousness is a skill, an accomplishment that perfects the inborn experiential functions of the human organism. It cannot be, of course, a consciously developed skill. No one is in a position, before he is conscious, to make a conscious decision whether to acquire consciousness.

We have ascertained the empirical basis of the concept of reality:

being present to itself, every conscious experience reveals to itself the opposition between its content and the act. Since the phenomenal consciousness does not project its assertiveness onto reality, it does not condemn itself to having to conceive reality as “being” or as “what exists.” Phenomenal consciousness automatically escapes the snares of metaphysical thought by failing to set them for itself. And since it does not assume that objects have any priority over conscious experience it will not suppose that there are degrees of reality. Phenomenological philosophy takes for granted that there cannot be “another world.” The empirically given world is the only real one. The reality of a thing is its relativity to other things. This includes, but is not restricted to, its relativity to human experience.

Chapter Two

PHILOSOPHICAL DEHELLENIZATION

A First Person Scientific Reflection

I put emphasis on the sub-title, “A First Person Philosophical Reflection,” in order to avoid any misunderstanding as to the intent of this book as an application of philosophical dehellenization. This book is a serious personal reflection in the first person. It is not a systematic presentation or exposé of a body of thought or a collection of philosophical ideas. Rather, it is an account of my personal thinking as I have come to understand it, by reading the works and digesting the ideas of other religious philosophers on the same topic, in particular, Dr Leslie Dewart. This chapter is a selection of certain personal reflections arising out of my understanding of philosophical religious insight as suggested by Edmund Husserl. This is to be found in his *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* and *Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man*, complied by Quentin Laurer.⁶ Initially, my personal reflections seemed as new revelations to me but over time, I had discovered that many other religious philosophers had discovered them as well. Among these religious philosophers, but not very well known today, are William Gladstone (1809-1898) and George Tyrrell (1861-1909). William Gladstone, an adherent of Church of England, was the English Prime Minister during the reign of Queen Victoria. George Tyrrell, S. J., a convert to Roman Catholicism, was a central figure in the so-called Modernist movement within Catholic belief as it developed in England. Although these two individuals never met they shared a common philosophical quest for authentic theological understanding. A colleague and I have written

elsewhere of the significance of their critical reflective and religious philosophical insights for our contemporary world.⁷ It is, however, the philosophical mind of Leslie Dewart that alerted me to the theme of dehellenization developing within Western Christian philosophical and religious thinking. During my undergraduate years at St Michael's College, University of Toronto, he introduced me to a method of critical and reasoned thinking that I have continued to employ up to the present day. In effect, he has tilled the philosophical ground for my personal reflections via a process of dehellenization. It is this process of dehellenization upon which I reflect personally and present in this chapter.

To my mind, contemporary religious philosophers, whether they are Jewish, Christian or Muslim, have a personal responsibility towards their respective communities of faith. This responsibility applies to their effort to produce a reasoned and scientific philosophy that is capable of supporting the faith of their traditions. William James appears to be of the same mind.⁸ It is more responsible for the religious philosopher to promote a reasoned and scientific philosophy, than a cultural folklore. A reasoned philosophy is not new given that its roots extend back to the ancient Greek thinkers. However, a reasoned and scientific philosophy is new in that it has produced the natural sciences that characterize Modernity. In short, my mind follows that of Alister McGrath who has probed the manner in which the natural sciences have “become the *ancilla theologiae nova*.⁹ A reasoned and scientific philosophy, as an *ancilla theologiae nova*, is not confined to a particular revealed faith tradition but is susceptible of interfaith dialogue. I do not suggest, however, that this personal responsibility need apply to religious philosophers of other, and non-revealed, belief systems or traditions. My reflection is reserved to the three previously mentioned traditions.

Religious philosophical thinking, carried out in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions, must occur within, not without, their communities of faith. These communities of faith mediate the

experiences of believers by passing on to future generations the fruits of their reflection. To my mind, in order for a religious philosopher to be credible today, scientific reflective thinking is a requirement. In the Western context, folklore, by itself, is not sufficient. Further, for our study of the past to be helpful it must suggest a strategy for coping with present experience. “In any field of experience, the results of new theories and new data will present a challenge to the conventional wisdom, but especially is this so when the new knowledge probes some of the most vulnerable and sensitive areas of our beliefs.”¹⁰ The activity of scientific religious philosophical thinking does probe some of the most sensitive and essential areas of our belief. It does this as a phenomenological, dehellenized philosophy *à la* Edmund Husserl, about which I will say more below. In any interfaith religious philosophical reflection, scientific reflective collaboration among all participants is a requirement. Scientific reflective collaboration is a rational, clear, consistent and methodological sharing of insights, professionally undertaken, into the personal, but not the private, experience of God. This constitutes theological activity. In short, scientific reflective collaboration is not folklore.

Among all the disciplines available to assist me, as a theologian in the critical task of collaborative reflection, a scientific philosophy is a most fundamental one. Psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, etc., make a contribution to the task but it is only philosophy that is in a privileged position to undertake this task of theological collaborative reflection. I have accepted Edmund Husserl’s view on the ability of philosophy to disclose essential insights that other disciplines cannot. In his perspective only philosophy can transcend being and address essence, whereas, the other disciplines, without transcending being, address being and the “that which” without which a thing cannot be. The universal character of a scientific philosophy suggests that it is to be preferred to any sociology or psychology in assisting the theologian in the task of critically interpreting the experience of the believing community or individual. Scientific philosophy is primarily a

personal and transcendental reflective way of evaluating the essence of experience. In contrast, disciplines like psychology and sociology are primarily corporate and non-transcendental factual ways of describing experience. The recent disciplines of psychology and sociology, conceived as “soft” sciences, share the clinical roots of a scientific attitude characteristic of the Cartesian mind-set. Such is not the case with a modern scientific philosophy that relates to the ancient discipline of Hellenic philosophy. Contrary to much current opinion, I suggest that Cartesian science is less suitable as an interpretive methodology for the theologian than a dehellenized science that has re-evaluated its Hellenic heritage, or more accurately, its Hellenistic heritage. James Payton makes the distinction between the Hellenic philosophy that developed within the culture of ancient Greece, and the Hellenistic philosophy that developed later within other cultures, that is, the European cultures, which incorporated their influence to some degree.¹¹ In short, contemporary Western philosophy needs to re-think the Cartesian mind-set and undertake a critical reflective interpretation of experience. In a critical philosophical reflection, I do know all the right questions to ask much less know all the right answers. Arising out of my experience, existential philosophical questions, which arise out of my intellect, preoccupy me today. An essential and phenomenological philosophical way of thinking, which is an existential way of thinking, is a contemporary method by which scientific philosophers may most satisfactorily evaluate their experience in community. There is no denying that in contemporary Western philosophical thinking such an essential method of philosophizing is replacing the classical method of philosophizing through a process of dehellenized interpretation.

A scientific philosophical approach is proper to Jewish, Christian and Islamic philosophy. By a scientific philosophical approach, I mean an interpretation of experience that has been arrived at through a critical methodology in contrast to an understanding of experience described in the folklore of one’s particular culture. A scientific philosophy transcends cultural expressions and differences

of faith communities. That means that a scientific religious philosophy is not the preserve of a single organized, visible and corporate community of faith, as previously mentioned, but is common to all three of them. Yet, within a Christian scientific philosophy there is the possibility that not all members of the visible Christian community belong to the invisible Christian community and vice versa. Baron Friedrich von Hügel, a contemporary of William Gladstone and George Tyrrell, had observed this same phenomenon.¹² A scientific philosophy, given its capacity to transcend differing cultures, is less likely to become enslaved to an institutional and political ideology than a philosophy dependent upon a particular cultural perspective. Such transcendence takes on significance for the interpretation of belief when the primary focus is on the word of God scientifically addressed within the believing community. In Jewish and Islamic religious philosophy, however, given the apparent lack of an equivalent to the Christian Reformation, it is questionable as to what degree this capacity to transcend differing cultural factions occurs in these two traditions. This question cannot be further pursued here, but merely brought to the fore. Whatever the religious context, should scientific philosophy fail at transcending ideological and institutional interests it then becomes a mere servant of the visible and temporal corporate community, and would not serve the true spiritual interests of the faithful. Such failure would amount to a living death for both the individual and the community.

Scientific philosophy must be distinguished from a pre-reflective attitude, which is a separate experiential activity in its own right. Poetry, myth and epic narratives reflect this attitude. As a distinct intellectual and experiential activity, however, scientific philosophy has its roots in the practical Western thinking of the early 19th Century. Within the contemporary European context scientific philosophy, that is, phenomenological philosophy reaches beyond the individualism of Western religious traditions. Scientific philosophy arising out of the context of the intellectual understanding of the Enlightenment and Reformation is developing

from a theoretical and ideological perspective to an essential and phenomenological perspective. In short, scientific philosophy is developing essentially into a dehellenized philosophy. However, despite this change scientific philosophy is still under-appreciated as a tool for those preparing to minister professionally in the interests of a particular religious tradition or faith community. One purpose of a scientific philosophy is to apprehend the meaning of *a ministerium verbi divini*, that is, to understand the Word the God of which is somehow beyond the concrete existential faith community. In the concrete existential faith community any spatial dichotomy between essence and praxis cannot be maintained in light of a scientific philosophy. In short, our understanding of the *ministerium verbi divini* must become dehellenized.

Scientific philosophy is nothing less than a scientific understanding of personal religious experience within a collective context, that is, within a community. As personal religious experience, scientific philosophy cannot be merely theoretical, that is, a non-existential or non-incarnated, discipline. As a merely theoretical and non-incarnated discipline scientific philosophy would lack the ability to examine the experience of doctrine or dogma in a believer's faith tradition. A theoretical and systematic objective examination of corporate and confessional faith standards of doctrine and dogma belongs more properly to the domain of religious studies and is not to be confused with a philosophical scientific theology. In a scientific philosophical reflection the disciplines that are the *loci* for such reflection are not restricted to the classical and theoretical disciplines of traditional academia. Rather, all human experience provides the *loci* for an essential scientific philosophical reflection.

Further, there are certain *existentialia*, or existential experiences, that make possible the basic dispositions I adopt within life. They are fear, despair, love, hope, suffering, death, happiness, and guilt. But these *existentialia* make up only one part of my existential matrix, the human part (*a partis hominis*). They do not make up

God's part, which is the theoretical part (*a parte Dei*). The religious philosophical interpretation of Judaism, Christianity and Islam recognizes that God's personal initiative calls all persons into existence from non-existence. Such initiative awaits an existential response from the person. For the phenomenologically minded philosopher questions require responses from each part, that is, from God's part and ours. However, it is only our part, not God's, which is the focus of scientific philosophical enquiry. Scientific philosophy says nothing about God's essence or existence. Quentin Lauer notes that even though Edmund Husserl did not enter into humanity's ultimate concerns he did confine himself to "philosophy's ultimate concerns, and these, he feels, are what philosophy can know with absolute, apodictic certitude. If God, freedom, and immortality cannot be known this way, then they simply are no concern of philosophy." Therefore, scientific philosophy's ultimate concern with respect to religious experience must be in dialogue with a community of artists, musicians, novelists, poets, philosophers, theologians, and always with the scriptures of a faith community. The revealed scriptures, not the doctrinal confessional standards of a faith community, are the data necessary for a scientific philosophical reflection. Artistry, music, novels, poetry, and theology are not necessary, but elective, within a scientific philosophical reflection.¹³

The act of philosophizing upon one's experience is universal in the sense that it constitutes all human reflection, whereas other disciplined activities merely augment human reflection. Contemporary human reflection need not be artistic, musical, literary, poetical or theological, but it must be scientific, that is, methodological and not folkloric, if it is to address the ultimate concerns of philosophy in Edmund Husserl's sense of the term. By this I do not deny that confessional corporate doctrine and dogma provide important data for religious philosophizing. I do mean, however, that religious philosophizing on confessional corporate doctrine and dogma is another activity and not of philosophy's ultimate concern, that is to say, such philosophizing is

religious sociology or religious psychology or another “soft” science. The most important data for religious sociology or religious psychology is provided by non-reflective experience of a faith community as a corporation, that is, as historical data. The most important data for scientific religious philosophizing, however, is provided by reflection on personal experience within the community. Thus, the old metaphysical and religious philosophical quests for a God that can be proved to exist are futile in the world of scientific philosophy. Further, such quests that are not rooted in reflective experience are theoretical and tell us nothing about the divine status. The task of the scientific religious philosopher is not to look for a polemic opportunity to prove a doctrinal point. Rather, the task is to express and to clarify the reflective experience of faith *vis à vis* scripture and tradition. Such is the primary task of the Hebrew, Christian and Islamic scientific religious philosopher — or theologian.

In the West, one’s religious life may be legally private but it is ethically and morally public. A scientific religious philosopher must be ethically and morally accountable within the public forum. The scientific religious philosophical developments that bring about social transformation within the public forum arise from a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the community. My moral duty, that is to say, my ethical religious response is not restricted, nor limited, to certain portions of the social, political or faith life. Rather, my ethical religious response is nothing less than my total public life that is shaped within and by the larger community. The morality of my total public life can only be revealed by a scientific religious philosophy, which validates the disciplines enlisted to aid in its disclosure.

After Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church deliberately attempted to enter a conversation about religious meaning in the public forum with other faith communities. Vatican II recognized that the corporate Church is to serve all humanity in its religious, as well as, secular life. This recognition raised the problem of the Church re-

defining her religious philosophy in the public forum. It needed to move from a religious philosophy that had, to a great extent, become Romanesque folklore to a scientific philosophy. Today, all Christians must converse, both intellectually and spiritually, with many other communities of differing and sometimes opposing religious philosophies. Specifically, beginning from the early 19th century onwards, the Roman Catholic Church left its classical corporate self-understanding to a significant degree and took on a personal self-understanding. And summarized by John Kobler: “As a result of this philosophical probing of the really real, leading intellectuals in Europe underwent an enormous attitude shift from *Concepts* (abstract scientific reason) to *Life* (concrete conscious experience)” [Kobler’s italics].¹⁴ Within Western Christendom this change in perspective initiated the so-called Modernist Movement, being a “phase of the liberalising movement in the Church of Rome by the *Civiltà Cattolica*, and it may be accepted: Modernism may be described as the shape which religion takes in the mind of the modern as distinct from the mediaeval man.”¹⁵ Modernism yields its greatest insights when considered as a scientific philosophy, which expressed itself within Roman Catholicism. In understanding herself personally the Roman Church had to abandon the theoretical notion that a single cultural norm, originating in ancient Rome, could continue to determine her self-understanding in the tradition of Hellenistic philosophical thinking. Thus, it was that the Roman Church accepted the essential and phenomenological approach that through a variety of cultures an active self-understanding can be developed through a process of a scientific religious philosophy, or through a process of dehellenization.

In the contemporary Western context, the majority of faith communities seek to dialogue with partners holding common beliefs wherever they may be found. These faith communities often practice religious tolerance, characteristic of the neutrality of the state, as a civic virtue. However, in addition to this positive effect, tolerance may have a negative effect as well. It seems that too much

variation resulting from civic tolerance in public religious dialogue fragments true discourse. Today, in the West, it seems that a concerted public religious philosophical discourse is lacking due to an exaggeration of civic tolerance leading to an “anything goes” attitude. Further, too much variation makes corporate dialogue extremely difficult. Often, lack of dialogue is evident beyond national boundaries. From a global perspective, Christian religious traditions lack a common public philosophical language for discourse among themselves, and with non-Christian traditions, to discuss public meaning, value, and experience. As a result, today much Christian religious philosophy is not as influential in the public forum as it had been in the past. The current situation in American Orthodoxy is a case in point.¹⁶ In short, classical Christendom is dead, or better, Hellenism is dead. Therefore, even though as Christians we inherit a religious context that has been well established and can easily be distinguished from a secular context our religious philosophy lacks a common public language which makes any discussion with other religious philosophies difficult.

Earlier, systematic theologians had invoked science in an attempt to address this problem of ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue. “St Thomas, for example, showed great skill in combining science and for the purpose of defining the Catholic position in the world.”¹⁷ We know today, however, that traditional science, often the standard of contemporary secular discussion, does not give answers to the deeper questions of meaning as it once did. In short, the optimism generated by 18th Century scientific progress has not materialized. Today, the more significant answers are provided by scientific philosophers who answer existential and essential questions and not by the merely theoretical and secular scientists. The Western religious philosophical tradition has developed a notion of a personal and collective *humanum* whose essence is capable of being consciously apprehended. That is, what describes humanity is captured in the *humanum* within the world. In the West it has been the traditional purpose of society

and government to enhance this *humanum* within the world. Only in the recent past has this enhancement been challenged by an inordinate development of an individualism which has permitted the concept of individual sovereignty to take preference, as it were, over the notion of a personal *humanum*. Such inordinate intellectual individualism may be corrected though an understanding of the *humanum* of a scientific religious philosophy.

In a scientific religious philosophy, one that supports a phenomenological theology, the idea of individual sovereignty cannot be an absolute ideal. The individual must be subordinated to God in some manner. *Gaudium et Spes*, or *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church* of the Second Vatican Council supported the concept that there is inherent value and meaning in the lives of all individuals who make up the social community. This inherent value and meaning is disclosed within the essence of the world's *humanum* and manifested ultimately as a Christian humanitarianism. Further, *Gaudium et Spes* notes that Christian humanitarianism is founded on a human dignity that is ultimately grounded upon God's revelation in Christ to individuals living in Christian communion. The *imitatio Christi*, as a particular way of life, then, is an embodiment of the essence of the personal *humanum*. Thus, in the contemporary era, religious philosophers and theologians have two tasks. The first is to interpret the corporate tradition of experience and the second is to interpret an individual's experience within that tradition. Both interpretations may be supported by a scientific religious philosophy.

As noted earlier, a phenomenological understanding is an alternative approach to theoretical understanding in religious philosophy. A phenomenological understanding does not emphasise the acquisition of skills, nor does it emphasise the development of a more comprehensive understanding of faith. The intent of a phenomenological approach is dehellenization, or the conscious creation of the future of belief. This is a radically different approach than the dominant one in our present Western culture that has grown

out of the European university system. Originally, religious colleges were set up to serve the academic and philosophical interests of the European Churches in their debates over the various theological opinions surrounding doctrine and dogma. This contrasted with issues of personal development. However, in our time, much Christian scientific religious philosophy is directed towards an essential understanding of personal issues instead of the debating of dogma and doctrine. In Christian scientific philosophical education the intent is to recognize the essential unity of one's mind to Christ's in such a way that praying and believing is one. A Christian scientific philosophy divorced from prayer is in trouble. A scientific religious philosophy that arises from the experience of the Christian God constitutes the essence of the creation of the future of belief. From this perspective, then, the particular disciplines of Pastoral Psychology and Pastoral Counselling, arising within an academic study of religion, address the believer's emotional constitution. Pastoral Psychology and Pastoral Counselling are verified, as it were, by a scientific religious philosophy. However, these particular sciences are not theology proper and, as a result, do not address the believer's spiritual constitution.

These particular disciplines, however, assist in developing the unfinished scientific philosophical business of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. That unfinished business continues to arise within the tension between a personal and a corporate philosophical understanding. Again, I cite the so-called Modernist Crisis, or Modernist Movement, which challenged the dominant corporate religious philosophical mind-set of the West with its roots in the scholastic tradition. As a result, this movement was condemned, as far as the Roman Catholic Church was concerned and, thus had no future among Catholic religious philosophers. However, history indicates otherwise and, to the benefit of the Church, positive insights have been gained from the scientific scholarship of Modernism, which have been introduced by Catholic philosophers into Western theology. One such theological benefit is the emphasis on an essential personal understanding, as opposed to ideological

corporate understanding, of the experience of the faith. I suggest that many of the positive results of the scientific scholarship of Modernism that have been accepted by Catholic philosophers are the realisations of the hope of the English religious philosopher, George Tyrrell. One such result, hoped for by Tyrrell, was that subjectivity and inter-subjectivity in philosophical methodology would replace ideological theory and ratiocination as primary in philosophical thought. However, much contemporary Catholic religious philosophical thinking, immediately prior to and since the election of Pope Benedict XVI, seems to be developing away from such scientific religious philosophical thinking. A particular philosophical understanding, of an earlier age, that is, Roman scholasticism, seems to be supplanting Vatican II's phenomenological approach, thus favouring a return to a Hellenized and traditional understanding over a phenomenological understanding.

Above, I distinguished between religious philosophy and religious studies. Religious philosophy characterizes the *ministerium verbi divini*, that is, a service to the word of God. The *ministerium verbi divini* is a broad concept and found not only in Christian understanding. Although it carries a particular meaning when understood within the Christian context. The *ministerium verbi divini*, as disclosed through an understanding of scientific religious philosophy, is appropriate for interpreting the subject of Jewish and Muslim theologies as well as the subject of Christian theology. While the *ministerium verbi divini* is a service to the individual in community, God is the one who is primarily served through the *ministerium verbi divini*. Such service, rendered to God, occurs within Jewish, Christian and Muslim revelation. At this point the question arises: Can such service be rendered to God outside of these faith traditions? Or, put another way, can a scientific philosophical understanding be beneficial to those who live outside a believing community? Further, in the Christian context, a particular question arises: Is being within the visible corporate church a prerequisite for doing theology? Religious philosophers, in the years prior to the

Second Vatican Council, noted that Catholic Christians acknowledged the invisible Church within the visible Church yet not simply as identical or co-extensive with it. In other words, there are many individuals within the visible Church who do not belong to the invisible Church and vice versa. Through service to the Word of God, then, scientific religious philosophers, Christian and non-Christian, need to somehow embody their thinking existentially and essentially in a first person reflective philosophical inquiry.

As a scientific religious philosopher, I find myself reflecting in an existential situation that I have not made or designed, but rather have inherited. Furthermore, I cannot stop my continual existential development and I am personally involved in its transformation. Thus, as a Western Christian, I live with the anxiety and tensions that accompany the end of conventional corporate Christianity. However, within this tension that signals the end of conventional corporate Christianity, there are indications of a new constitution and a new future for corporate Christianity. As one religious philosopher has noted: “I intend to clarify somewhat...what prospects are opening up for the possibility of a new form and practice of belief in God which modern man, standing in the nascent world of our time, can consider responsible.”¹⁸ These new prospects are disclosed within the process of dehellenization, or within the creation of the future of belief.

A scientific understanding of the person in community demonstrates a shift in the methodology of Western religious philosophical thinking. Such a shift did begin in the West soon after the First World War. About this time there was also a shift in the understanding of that which is transcendent and that which is sacred. No longer was the transcendent and the sacred understood to be disclosed through a feudal and monarchical society, which had given its form to the medieval institutional church. The medieval institutional church remained constant as the Western European feudal culture evolved into an industrial civilization and democratic society. As a consequence, those who were not members of this

visible feudal church may have enjoyed the benefits of its presence and social activity but they were not direct participants in its spiritual activity or life. Yet, this did not mean that those outside the visible limits of the feudal Church were not members of an invisible Church in some manner. Indeed, many of us know through direct experience that it is the case that from those who have been excommunicated from the visible Church, the true Church is often constituted.

In contemplating revelation scientific religious philosophers do not confine themselves to any pre-given philosophical system. Our scientific philosophical reflections arise out of an intellectual world of the inner human experience that is disclosed within various cultures. In a similar manner the pre-scientific cultures, such as the folkloric cultures, but not of the Jewish, Christian or Islamic tradition, have mythologies that explain and interpret their inner human experience.¹⁹ Christian scientific philosophy differs from Christian ideological philosophy in that it takes human experience as its primary subject matter, not doctrine and dogma. This means that, as subject matter for a scientific religious philosophical interpretation, historical texts and records themselves are secondary. In short, scientific religious philosophical reflection is an activity of reflection on personal experience, not on the intellectualization of ideals or values.

In a scientific religious philosophy, I, as a believer, transcend the boundaries of my creaturely existence in such a way that I become more truly and holistically myself. Such a transcendental encounter is not for mystics only. Rather, it is the centre of life for all Christians. I come to know myself as I come to know any other person, that is, through reflection. For faithful Christians this requires a perpetual scientific philosophical effort in the first person.

Scientific Philosophy and the Experience of the Individual in Community

In the balance of this chapter I place emphasis on the secondary purpose of the *ministerium verbi divini*. Primarily, God is to be served through service to the Word. However, I reflect here upon the individual's experience in community that creates a future for personal and collective belief. For many believers, our experience is that we are estranged from the religion we have inherited. This estrangement is due to the end of conventional Christianity and the death of the concept of the traditional God. The traditional philosophical conventions developed and designed to protect us from anxiety in our human condition have been shown to be inadequate and unsuccessful in the modern world. New philosophical safeguards that are characteristic of phenomenology, not scholasticism, are in the process of being created. However, their general acceptance is relative and somewhat limited within contemporary philosophical thought. The traditional safeguards of a religious philosophical ideology have been largely expressed in classical terms within conventional Christianity. These classical forms of expression, conceptions, and customs, as well as Christianity's spirit and mentality are rooted in the world of a Greco-Roman-Germanic civilization that has its anchor in ancient Hellenic philosophy. Experience has shown that profound changes due to our existential philosophical understanding bring about changes in conventional Christianity. As an example, the change from an objective to a subjective point of view in interpreting our experience accounts for the fact that many Christian churches have become humanized institutions in which we, not God, are the measure.

Scientific philosophy supplies an intellectual embodiment and methodology for theologically interpreting revelation within a community. The embodiment and methodology of scientific religious philosophy, as a human phenomenon, is essentially the same for all. We must understand that our interpretation of

revelation needs to be in harmony with the mind of the age. The interpretation of revelation amounts to an ever-varying expression of spiritual experience. As a religion, Christianity is a doctrinal system and a construct of human understanding. Christianity, because of its later, that is, post-Socratic Hellenic conditioning, is a construction, not of poetical, but of theological, philosophical, ethical, scientific and historical beliefs and conceptions of the teaching of Christ. An examination of religion as a social construction thus leads to self-discovery and to the act of seeing for ourselves and to the act of doing for ourselves.

The philosophy most suitable for contemporary scientific philosophers to disclose what is “known” is phenomenology. Phenomenology permits the scientific philosopher to attain an essential understanding of experience as pure consciousness. Only in an essential understanding of experience as pure consciousness can the Christian experience be profoundly meaningful. Because phenomenology allows apprehension of essences as pure consciousness in Husserl’s sense, it is able to disclose the profound meaning of God’s influence upon the human-as-subject. As well, individual scientific philosophical thinking has an influence on the moral and social life of the community. History shows us that the majority of religious philosophical development has not been the work of professional doctrinal and dogmatic philosophers, for these are catechists, but rather of individuals who have to some extent corrected and modified the system. Such modification has often happened in opposition to official philosophical doctrine and dogma. The thinking of these individuals and their philosophical views have acted and reacted on each other. The philosophical engagement, by individuals who corrected and modified the system, was conducted in such a manner that their philosophy more properly reflected the signs of their times, rather than classical times.

Scientific religious philosophy seems, for the moment at least, to lie outside the official Catholic tradition of the interpretation of revelation. Further, scientific religious philosophy seems to be

regarded by the official Catholic magisterium, that is, the teaching authority of the Church, as incapable of properly interpreting revelation. However, Pope Benedict XVI's comment calling for us to broaden our concept of reason suggests that all interpretation, including scientific interpretation, might be included in official Catholic interpretation.²⁰ The philosopher's job is to inquire into experience, not to interpret revelation. Theological interpretation is for the theologian. The scientific religious philosopher's investigations are made within the existential order and not from probing the depths of revelation that discloses the mind of God, as it were. It could be argued that the special task of Christian metaphysics, which does not belong to scientific philosophy from Edmund Husserl's perspective, is to show that which grounds the total picture of the world reflected by the Christian faith. Thus, scientific philosophers are not central to church's life but the *sensus fidelium* is. In other words, the Church could get along without a scientific philosophical class of professional thinkers but it could not get along without the *sensus fidelium*.

History shows that controversial issues in religion, characterized by the Modernist movement, which was introduced by the new scientific knowledge of the late 19th and early 20th centuries into the American Church, were contested at the pastoral or practical level. However, the same controversial issues in France and England were contested at the level of philosophical and theoretical argument. The French and English philosophers could not understand the non-metaphysical or practical language of the North American philosophers and theologians. Thus, they tended to look upon American thought as somewhat heretical. This view created a dichotomy between North American and Continental philosophical thought. As was the case in England and the Continent that liberal Catholics attempted to integrate the new scientific knowledge within the teaching authority of the Church. That is to say that the Modernists, for their part, attempted to reconcile the conflict between the Church and new scientific knowledge by up-dating the meaning of doctrine, dogma and Church authority.

Unlike philosophy, theology is a process involving the self-revelation of that which is Divine. For the French and Italian Modernists theological study was a natural activity that included a life of prayer. Many Modernist theologians accepted that a saintly life replaced the scholastic philosophical understanding of doctrine and dogma as the proper interpreter of revelation. As George Tyrrell reminds us, “Theology is not the product of the spiritual life of the faithful, but of the intellectual life of the Schools.”²¹ In the time of George Tyrrell there was a trend away from professional theologians serving the doctrinal and dogmatic needs of the Church. The new trend was to engage in a scientific religious philosophy and to develop a methodology to serve the existential needs of the individual in community. Even so, the trend was minimally successful and classical philosophical construction, which is rooted in scholasticism, has remained to a large degree an activity of the institutional Church and not an activity of the *sensus fidelium*.

Today, scientific religious philosophy, as a human discipline, must take into account all religious phenomena, not just Christianity. Scientific religious philosophy is a labour of reason that recognizes revelation from the Jewish, Christian and Islamic perspectives. It must be remembered that any scientific philosophy is an afterthought, that is, a reflective exercise of our understanding. Thus, from a scientific religious philosophical perspective it matters little that Christianity has developed in Orthodox, Roman, Reformed and Protestant forms. Within a scientific religious philosophical approach all Christians are able to share in the transition to a new expression and practice of the faith through a phenomenological approach in interpreting their experience.

Further, in light of my experience, I suggest that a phenomenological philosophy, as a scientific philosophy, brings about an end to the antithesis that exists among Orthodoxy, Rome and the Reformation. I suggest that phenomenological philosophy does this by bringing an end to the antithesis between objectivism and subjectivism by recognizing each as equi- primordial. In other

words, phenomenologically understood, any distinction between them is a logical fiction, not factual. Thus, in ending this antithesis, a new Christian realization may be neither Orthodox, nor Roman, nor Reformed. This presents an exciting possibility for scientific religious philosophers. It was an exciting possibility for Maude Petre, who, as a result of being a close friend and confidant of George Tyrrell, was influenced by Modernist thought. But, there have been some spurious and erroneous notions within contemporary philosophical thinking that have arisen out of the Modernist movement, which have altered our orthodox understanding. Erroneous notions arise when Christianity is understood without Christ and becomes, not a new Christianity, but a new social ideal. And Christianity understood with a mystical, but not historical, Christ is not a new Christianity but rather another religion. Further, Christianity understood with Christ as a moral ideal but not worthy of worship, is not new Christianity, but an adaptation of Christian teaching to other religious or moral systems. It is clear that in Christian religious philosophy certain developments are not proper developments at all. Rather, they are substitutions of one idea for another. In such cases of substitution authentic Christianity has a better chance of survival in its old form rather than in any new form.

The survival of orthodox Christianity requires that philosophy and theology take a scientific approach in the contemporary age otherwise they have no reason to exist. This is especially true in the University where they fulfill their task of inquiry into the rationality of faith.²² In our contemporary context with its emphasis on the needs of the individual there is a danger that the believing community may be understood as less than necessary for the spiritual life. This is an erroneous belief. One must not forget that it is through the believing community that new generations are introduced to the faith. It must not be forgotten that the task of the philosopher is the analysis of public life and of communal experience with regard to essential individual issues. Further, it must be remembered that sociological or psychological dimensions of

the philosopher's task are secondary, even though they may have a religious purpose.

Scientific philosophy, as an essential activity, may be directed to a religious purpose. Tertullian, the Carthaginian theologian, who died circa 230, spoke of the "natural man," simple, rude, uncultured, untaught, and not yet ruined by Greek education, as being *anima naturaliter Christiana*. Tertullian invited individuals to return to their own religious experience since it is prior to any independent thought or theory. In this they could explore their spiritual life in order to find the Christian route to God. An earlier philosophical thinker, Socrates, in his dialectical approach, desired to help clarify the thinking of poets, politicians and whomever he met in the market place both young and old. However, Socrates did not initiate a system of philosophy. Rather, he undertook a responsible approach to thinking. While it may be true that for many of our contemporaries God has died in the Western culture of the nineteenth century; God may yet return to our culture understood through the scientific use of new images and new symbols. Interpreting these new images and symbols is the task of scientific religious philosopher. But it is to be remembered that the task of the scientific religious philosopher is temporary. It is temporary for the theologian also. Contemporary thinkers know, from their experience, that there is no final philosophy or theology. The work of the theologian today is conceived differently than in the days of the great theological systems. The contemporary task of the scientific religious philosopher is to make known the great abiding truths of rational belief to a new generation. The principle merit and usefulness of scientific religious philosophy, that is, of dehellenized philosophy in theological interpretation is to satisfy the expectation of the believer living in community.

GLOSSARY

Eidos/essence: *Eidos* is Plato's alternative term for Idea or Form that Edmund Husserl utilized to designate universal essences. Essence is that what makes a thing what it is and without which it would not be what it is. In Husserl's writings essence often refers to the "whatness" of things, as opposed to their "thatness" (i.e., their existence). Phenomenological philosophers accept that the notion of essence is highly complex and that the early Husserlian view tended toward simplifying the search for essences in the writings of some of his followers. Essence is not a single, fixed property by which we know something; rather, it is meaning constituted by a complex array of aspects, properties and qualities.

Holism: The term derives from the Greek, *holos*, meaning all, entire, total, and reflects the idea that all the properties of a given system (biological, chemical, social, economic, mental, linguistic, etc.) cannot be determined or explained by its component parts alone. Instead, the system as a whole determines in an important way how the parts behave. It is the doctrine that the identity of a subject is determined by its place in the web of beliefs comprising a whole theory or group of theories and maintains that the subject is greater than the sum of all its parts. Johan Christian Smuts coined the phrase in *Holism and Evolution* in 1927.

Lebenswelt: This is one's world that is characteristic of the pre-philosophical or un-differentiated world without particular themes and that is simply taken for granted. It is the familiar world in which humanity lives. However, when themes arise from the Umwelt through rational investigation, the *Lebenswelt* becomes reconstituted and becomes a world of essences, or an essential world. It is the world created by individuals even though they do not realize that they have done so.

Phenomena: These presentations reveal nothing of the existence of things. They allow a rational knowledge of essences of things.

Essences cannot be derived from appearances they can only be seen in the appearances.

Philosophy: Intended by Edmund Husserl to develop the person or a community of persons. Ultimately, it is almost synonymous with “culture” whose purpose is to give a satisfactory answer to the problems of life. A new philosophy, determined by the problems of life to be solved, must be created.

Praxis: This Greek term means conscious action or doing, unlike production that is aimed at some end or purpose. According to Aristotle actions are subject to moral valuation if they result from deliberate choice.

Science: Edmund Husserl considers phenomenology as a science because it has disposed of contingency in its methodology. Hence, what is left is necessarily left to consciousness and can be known in no other way.

Sensus fidelium: In the Catholic tradition this term refers to the “sense of the faithful,” the idea that beliefs, consciences and experiences of good and honest Catholics are among the manifestations of truth in Catholic theology. Thus, it something, which the hierarchy is to consult in making decisions about Catholic doctrine. Should Catholic laity dissent from the Catholic hierarchy, it may be that the laity is in fact following the correct and true Catholic understanding while the official hierarchy may be in error.

Self: One’s self exists through a process of differentiation. As an agent the objective self is operative, materially composed and an existent. As a mind the subjective self is causally ineffective, immaterial and non-existent.

Subjectivity: The high degree of subjectivity is what characterizes Edmund Husserl’s philosophy as new. The newness resulting from a high degree of subjectivity is not a permanent state of affairs for

the thinker. The reduction to subjectivity cannot be accomplished once and for all: unless constantly forced to make this reduction, the human mind will follow its natural bent and become lost in objectivism. Edmund Husserl's philosophy is a constant resistance to the mind's natural tendency to go in a counter direction.

Transcendental phenomenology: This is an activity on the part of the philosopher, with the understanding that, that the being given to consciousness is such that it is impossible for it to be given otherwise.

Umwelt: *Umwelt* means the environment or surrounding world that is the biological foundation at the very epicenter communication and signification in the human and non-human animal. The German term is usually translated as “subjective universe.” Understood as the environing world it is not the objective world of familiar experience but the world constituted by the spiritual subject. Subjects can have different *Umwelts*, even though they share the same environment.

Wholism: This term is not merely a variant spelling of “holism,” but the meaning is similar except for the understanding that the subject is greater than the sum of its parts.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allan Savage possesses earned doctorates in Theology from the University of South Africa (1993) and the St Elias School of Orthodox Theology (2007). Ordained in 1978, he is now retired and living in Northern Ontario, and travelling at every opportunity.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A Phenomenological Understanding of Certain Liturgical Texts: The Anglican Collects for Advent and the Roman Catholic Collects for Lent (2001) [University of America Press]

This book examines the philosophical premises underlying the language used in liturgical prayers. Scholastic philosophy, the dominant philosophical perspective in the West, is no longer satisfactory for contemporary religious formulation. Phenomenological philosophy appears to be replacing scholastic philosophy in forming and understanding personal and communal religious beliefs. The Collects of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Eucharistic liturgies for Advent and Lent were examined, re-written and field tested. The focus group, for field- testing, was composed of individuals who formally engage in research into spirituality and religious experiences. *A Phenomenological Understanding of Certain Liturgical Texts* encourages further investigation into the growing use of phenomenology in liturgical understanding based on a discernible trend in this direction.

Faith, Hope and Charity as Character Traits in Adler's Individual Psychology: With Related Essays in Spirituality and Phenomenology (2003) [University of America Press]

(Co-author Sheldon William Nicholl)

In Part One, Sheldon Nicholl offers an outline of Adler's life and the basics of his Individual Psychology. Allan Savage examines the relationship between Individual Psychology and Pastoral Theology. Special attention is given to the role of cognitive therapy. The cardinal virtues of faith, hope and charity are explored, in some detail, in the context of Adler's Individual Psychology. As character traits they are found to be in accord with the development of Adler's notion of *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*. Part Two is a compilation of previously published essays in American and British journals. One

section consists of a set of six exchanges between Erik Mansager and Allan Savage over the concept of "critical collaboration." Other previously published essays by Savage incorporate Adlerian themes. However, chapter eight is not specifically Adlerian in content. Since the root of Adler's Individual Psychology is anchored in German philosophical thought of the early 1900's this chapter explores notions derived from the later Heidegger and the thought of Husserl.

A Contemporary Understanding of Religious Belief within Mental Health (2007) [Melrose Books, UK]

This short book suggests the need for psychiatrists to work with the knowledge of theology so that mentally ill patients who hold strong religious beliefs may receive appropriate treatment. The work is introduced by discussing the definition of mental illness, the meaning of religious belief in modern society and the view that psychiatry has of it. He states that 'Theology can make a significant contribution to the integration of mental health and religious belief.' Reverend Savage promotes the phenomenological approach to understanding religious belief, an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience. He claims that secularisation in modern society has caused 'a fracture between religion and spirituality.' He then discusses how society influences the form that religious belief takes and how it decides what is or what is not 'normal.' The author explains how psychiatry today is a combination of psychoanalysis and the chemical management of neurological processes. It is debatable whether general practitioners should prescribe antidepressants without prior consultation with a psychiatrist. The role of the psychiatrist seems to be diminishing, but 'there is no question that for the near future the psychiatrist will remain a moral agent on behalf of the community'; a position that was traditionally held by priests. Reverend Savage writes in a very learned style and his book may be a useful addition to the bookshelves of undergraduate and practising psychiatrists.

The Ecology: A "New to You" View - An Orthodox Theological Ecology (2008) [Artbookbindery.com]

The ideas presented in this book, in fact, are not new. They represent problems arising from the new orientation of the Western World that followed the Great War of 1914-1918. Much contemporary theology still deals with issues that have been identified as “Modernism” by the ecclesiastical authorities of an earlier day. What is new in this book, however, is a phenomenological theological consideration in the context of a contemporary global ecology, and not in the context of the traditional ecclesiastical politics of Eastern and Western Churches.

ENDNOTES

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³ Leslie Dewart, *The Future of Belief* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), 7.

⁴ Leslie Dewart, *Evolution and Conscious: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature*. Reviewed by Gregory Nixon on May 8, 2000 (<http://www.amazon.com>).

⁵ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Future of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 12.

⁶ Quentin Lauer, *Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965).

⁷ Allan Savage and George Drazenovich, *Reflections on the Interior Life: Critical Insights from William Gladstone and George Tyrrell* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2006).

⁸ William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism: A Pluralistic Universe* (London: Longmans, 1958), 13.

⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 7.

¹⁰ Harry Girvetz, George Geiger, Harold Hantz and Bertam Morris, *Science, Folklore and Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 399.

¹¹ James Payton, *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL:

IVP Academic, 2007), 22.

¹² Friedrich von Hügel, *Eternal Life: A Study of the Implications and Applications* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912).

¹³ Quentin Lauer, *Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 46.

¹⁴ John Kobler, “Vatican II’s Pastoral Theology Needs Philosophy,” *The Modern Schoolman*, LXXVIII, 1 (November 2000, pp. 89-95), 89.

¹⁵ Alfred Fawkes, *Studies in Modernism* (London: Smith & Elder, 1913), 373.

¹⁶ George E Matsoukas, *Orthodox Christianity at the Crossroad: A Great Council of the Church - When and Why* (New York: iUniverse, 2009).

¹⁷ Harry Girvetz, George Geiger, Harold Hantz and Bertam Morris, *Science, Folklore and Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 169.

¹⁸ W. H. van de Pol, *The End of Conventional Christianity* (New York: Newman Press, 1968), 285.

¹⁹ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Religious Diversity* (New York: Crossroad Press, 1965), 9.

²⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, “Faith and Reason and the University Memories and Reflections.” (lecture before representatives of Science at the University of Regensburg, September 12, 2006).

²¹ George Tyrrell, *The Church and the Future* (London: Priory Press, 1910), 157.

²² Pope Benedict XVI, “Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections.”